

HOW TO LOSE INDIA?

BY

C. S. RANGA IYER

*Author of "Father India," "India in the Crucible"
and "India—Peace or War?"*

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“It is my considered judgment that you have a good chance of keeping India in the Empire for ever. I say deliberately that if you refuse the opportunity you will infallibly lose India before two generations have passed.”

—RT. HON. STANLEY BALDWIN (at the Conservative Party's Special Meeting on December 4, 1934.)



PUBLISHERS' PREFACE. •

Mr. C. S. Ranga Iyer, author of *Father India* (Selwyn and Blount, London) which went into thirteen editions in one year and was a best seller, has in his present book, *How to Lose India*, brought the story of the Indian reforms to its conclusion. In *India in the Crucible* he took up the reforms as they actually were in the melting pot as revealed by the voluminous publication of the correspondence between the Government of India and the Provincial Governments on the working of dyarchy. In *India: Peace or War?* (Harraps, London) Mr. Ranga Iyer brought the story up to the date of the declaration of Dominion Status by Lord Irwin. In *How to Lose India*, he begins where *India: Peace or War* ended. He dwells upon a controversy which has created much fervour on both sides of the ocean.

How to Lose India consists of three parts. The First Part deals with the achievements and failures of the Socialist Government in their handling of the Indian problem. In the Second Part of the book, the author dwells upon the New Dispensation, the Congress and the Future, a Constituent Assembly, Communal Award and other matters of current interest. The Chapter "From Gandhi to Hitler" removes the veil which hides the future. A Chapter on "Mahatma Gandhi and Lord Willingdon" reveals the first talk between the two personalities on Satyagraha. "In

Part III of *How to Lose India*, the author reviews the Swarajist Revolt in the Assembly, the Congress views on the Reforms, the White Paper and the Joint Committee Report. The author concludes by supplying the connecting links between Lord Willingdon's letters to Mr. Lloyd George and the Joint Committee Report.

A member of the Legislative Assembly for a period of eleven years without interruption, the author has given much thought to the problem of Indian constitutional reforms. As an old Congressman his interest in them is older than the Montagu reforms. He deals with the past with easy familiarity. The present interests him more than the past. The things of the future, to him, rest not on the knees of the gods but the pages of *How to Lose India*.

January 1935.

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INTRODUCTORY

"He cannot 'scape their censures, who delight
To misapply whatever he shall write."

MASSINGER—*Emperor of East.*

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

POPE—*Essay on Man.*

This book begins with the constitutional stage that followed the first Civil Disobedience movement when Extremists and Moderates alike demanded a Round Table Conference to settle the Indian problem of Dominion Status. It is rather strange that the Archbishop of Canterbury should have justified the omission from the Joint Committee Report of the Viceregal declaration, in his speech in the House of Lords. It is even more strange that Lord Halifax does not see eye to eye with the late lamented Lord Irwin! Did Lord Halifax become cautious after Mr. Churchill's row in the Joint Committee before which he appeared as a witness? Lord Halifax reminded Mr. Winston Churchill of an identical outburst of his when he was a member of the Cabinet. That erratic genius smartly confessed that he had committed a "mistake"! Does Lord Halifax too think his Indian pronouncement was a "mistake"? Why then has he not stood by it and fought for it, as he was inclined to do, when Lords Birkenhead and Reading asked for his Viceregal head on a charger? It was the declaration of Dominion Status which sent a thrill of hope throughout India. The Round Table Conference

was summoned to give effect to that declaration. The Joint Committee Report which has completed the labours of the Round Table Conference not only makes no reference to Dominion Status but avoids that phrase like poison! It takes as the basis of the new Constitution Act the old Montagu announcement.

In omitting all reference to Dominion Status, the Joint Committee have followed the Simon Report, the least line of resistance. The Joint Committee, however, should not have ignored the fact that the Round Table Conference included not only delegates from British India but also the Indian States. The latter did not come under the purview either of the Simon Commission or of the Montagu announcement. The Irwin *pledge* of Dominion Status itself was given when the vision of a Greater India floated before the imagination of our Princes and People. The Indian Delegates to the Joint Committee have stated clearly in their Memorandum that "Indian public opinion has been profoundly disturbed by the attempts made during the last two or three years to qualify the repeated pledges given by responsible Ministers on behalf of His Majesty's Government. Since it is apparently contended that only a definite statement in an Act of Parliament would be binding on future Parliaments and that even the solemn declaration made by His Majesty the King-Emperor on a formal occasion is not authoritative, we feel that a declaration in the preamble is essential in order to remove present grave misgivings and avoid future misunderstandings."

In vain did the Labour Members remind their colleagues in the Joint Committee of this passage in Indian Delegates' Memorandum. In vain did they protest against the omission of the objective of the Constitution which, in their language, is "nothing less

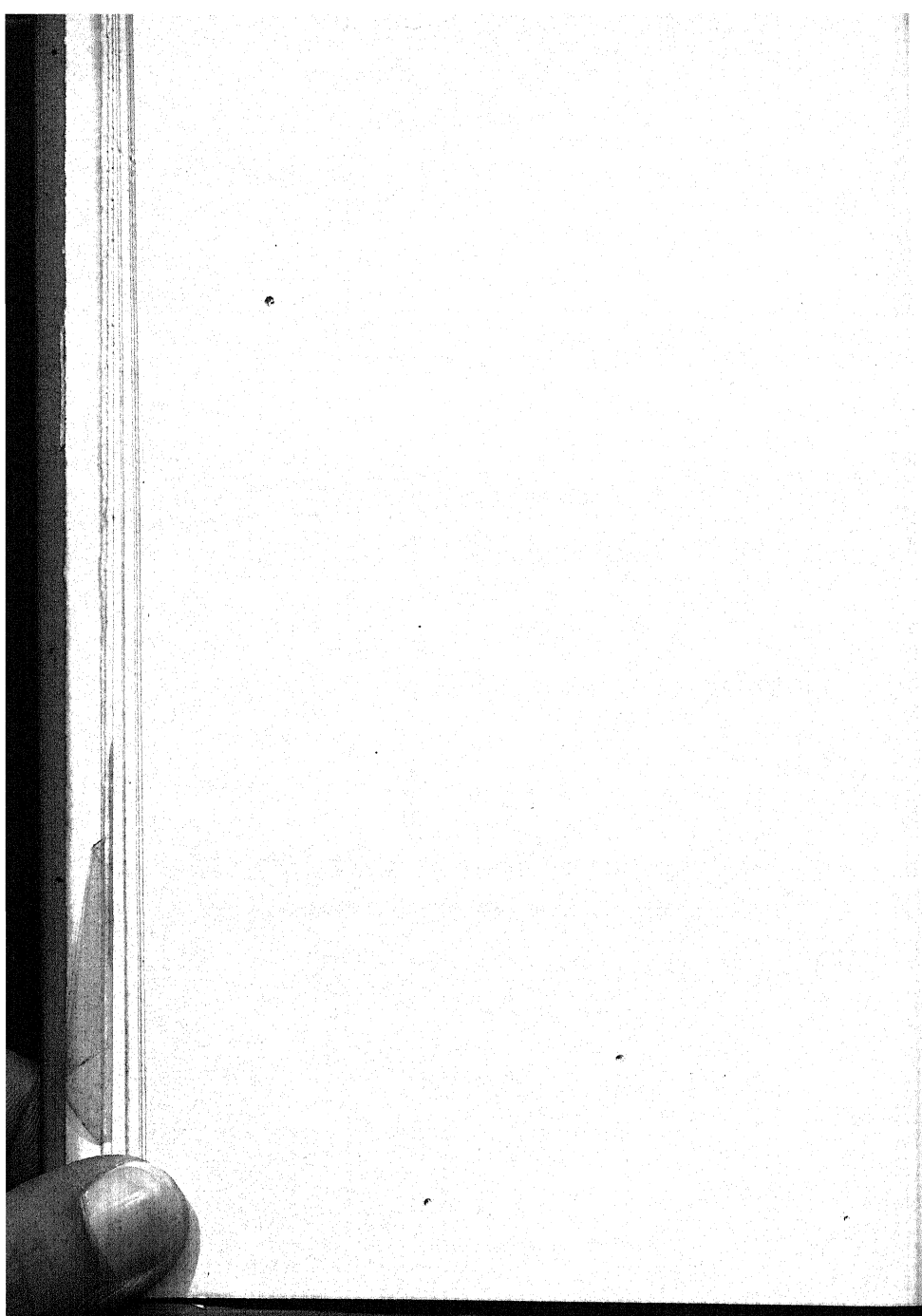
than Dominion Status." The Labour members were "insistent on this point, because evidence has been put before us, with which we wish to record our entire disagreement, which purported to show that Dominion Status, with all its implications, never formed the subject of any pledge to India." The Joint Committee were thinking more of England when they evaded the pledge than of India.

Turning to the Indian picture, one finds that even though the Congress had lost the main battle, it has won the General Election. It retains the power to hate and hit. Its No-changers who find that Civil Disobedience is overruled by a determined Viceroy, have sent their emissaries to His Excellency's legislative out-house. They come resolved to protest :

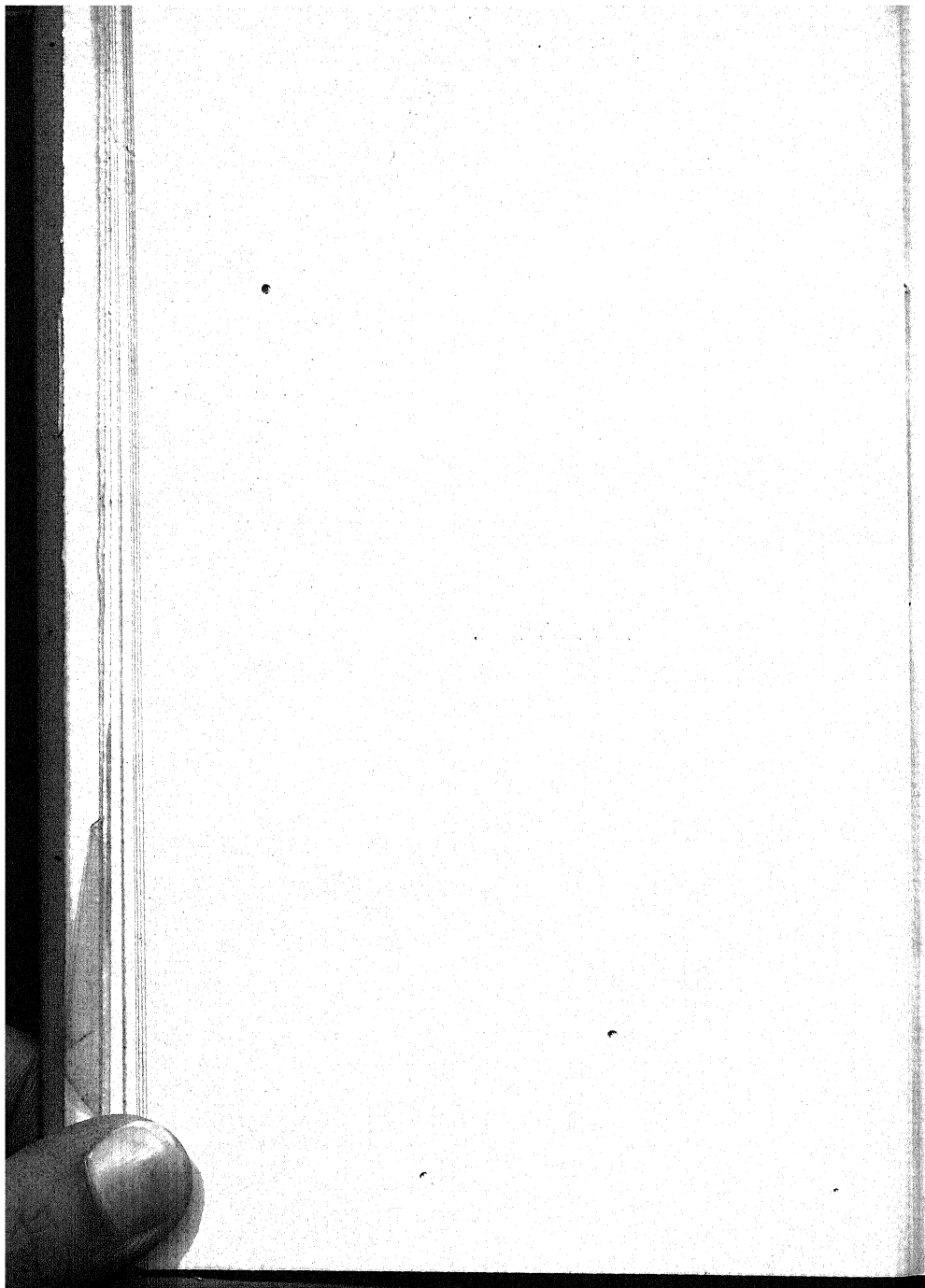
"Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew and the dog will have his day."

What honest people dread is a cat and dog fight. Communalists must behave! How will the Congress fare in the bigger fray? What role will the Government play? Officialdom, no longer up against Civil Disobedience, will bear with patience even when the Opposition push without prudence. This much the new Home Member has not indiscreetly revealed at a Lahore farewell dinner. Meantime, the Mahatma plies the eternal Charka, the Wheel of Destiny, the music of which must affect the course of friend and foe in the Assembly. For as Sir Henry Craik meant it and nearly said it, in his post-prandial speech :—

"There is so much good in the worst of us,
And so much bad in the best of us,
That ill-behoves any one of us,
To find any fault with the rest of us."



PART I



CHAPTER I

WITH TWO VOICES!

"The voice grew faint: there came a further change"

"The Vision of Sin"

—Tennyson.

The Right Honourable Wedgwood Benn spoke with pardonable pride in the Mother of Parliaments that he was determined to revive the Montagu spirit.¹ He spoke with that feeling which comes from sincerity. His was a first class debating speech.

Earlier in the debate Mr. Lloyd George had denounced Mr. Benn and an enthusiastic colleague of his in the Cabinet, Mr. Lansbury for issuing a 'shout of joy;' for 'dancing before the Ark.' The Welsh wizard was particularly furious with his quondam associate. Mr. Benn was a Liberal once but is now a Socialist.

Men have a right to change. The nochangers were not a class of whom Lloyd George of old was fond. He had a contempt for them as those who remember his Lime House speeches know. He once ridiculed a stickler for consistency as a "stick in the mud."

That day—when the fateful debate took place in the Commons and when the Prime Minister of a Coalition Government—which had endorsed the Montagu pledge—let himself go—the fates had conspired against India.

Lord Reading—who should have known better—had opened the ball in the House of Lords two days

1. *Hansard*: 7th November 1929: pp. 1326 and 1327.

earlier. He had reproached his successor to the great office of Indian Viceroyalty for having proclaimed in a special *Gazette of India Extra-ordinary* on behalf of His Majesty's Government that Dominion Status was Britain's pledge to India—a pledge implicit and explicit in the Montagu Declaration of an earlier date¹. Lord Reading's complaint was that Lord Irwin had no business to put his own interpretation on the Montagu pledge.

Mr. Lloyd George mocked the Secretary of State for India playing the part of a new Messiah—"this pocket edition of Mosses"² "But I never worshipped the Golden Calf," retorted Mr. Benn. Mr. Lloyd George returned with withering scorn: "The Right Honorable gentleman has shown a very shrewd appreciation of what is known as the main chance; and the Calf which has been sacrificed for him has its golden side." Later in the debate, Mr. Benn described Mr. Lloyd George's speech as "most lamentable and mischievous." The sum and substance of Mr. Benn's elocution was that he stood by the Conservative Viceroy who had pledged Dominion Status to India on behalf of His Majesty's Government.

The speech did not clear the doubts and suspicions of the Liberal Leader who interrupted and enquired whether the Secretary of State for India had accepted the interpretation of the Indian Nationalist leaders on the Viceroy's "manifesto"—a rather satirical but very Lloyd Georgian description of a solemn Viceregal proclamation. Mr. Benn replied: "the declaration of the Viceroy stands as it stands." The Secretary of State for India warned his erstwhile chief not to cross-question him "with a view to making difficulties" in India.

1. Parliamentary Declaration of 1917 by Edwin Samuel Montagu, Secretary of State for India.

2. Hansard. 7th November 1929. p. 1321.

This observation was the occasion for an uproar on the opposition benches.

Mr. Baldwin sat calmly enjoying the fun but Mr. Winston Churchill who was shaking with emotion joined in the howl. Mr. Lloyd George rose again to interrupt amidst Conservative and Liberal cheers, Mr. Benn who was in possession of the House gave way. What followed may be recorded in the language of the official report :

Mr. Lloyd George: The right hon. Gentleman has no right to say that. I was responsible, as head of the Government, for these reforms and for this pledge, and I have as deep a sense of responsibility as he has, and I think I am as patriotic as he is. I am asking this question in order to avoid difficulties, and as the right hon. Gentleman knows, in private —[AN HON. MEMBER: "Nobody believes it!"]—I take no notice of that interruption. In private, for the last several weeks before it ever came to this House, I have been urging these matters, when I thought they would never be a subject of public discussion, and in order to avoid the difficulties which will undoubtedly arise if this interpretation is accepted in India without a single word of repudiation. I am asking the right hon. Gentleman now whether he accepts this very grave interpretation in a formal document, a formal considered document, by the Indian leaders in regard to this Conference.

Mr. Benn: I should not have said that the right hon. Gentleman was cross-examining me in order to make difficulties, and I apologise to him. I should not have said that. I should have said that the question he was asking might make difficulties, and the answer to him is this. There is the statement. It is explicit and clear. Nothing has to be added and

nothing has to be taken from it. [Hon. Members: "Answer!"] I have nothing to add.

Mr. Lloyd George: If it were clear, it would be clear to these extraordinarily able men who are the Indian leaders. They are all very able. They are asking, and they say at the end—they have practically asked whether they are right in their interpretation. They are practically asking it, and it is perfectly evident that it is not clear to them, because there is one interpretation that has been put here and there is another interpretation that has been placed upon it in India, and the interpretation placed upon it in India is far more important, if I may say so.

Mr. Benn: I have nothing to add, not one single word, to the answer I have given. The Viceroy's statement was very carefully drafted. It has been approved and it is published. I have made it perfectly clear to-day that both in respect of the declaration and of the conference it stands as it stands, and no questions of the right hon. Gentleman will lead me to add one word or take one word away, and I must beg him to regard that as my final answer.

Sir William Davison: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with what Lord Passfield said?

Mr. Benn: I will say no more. I had some other remarks of a general kind to make, but I do not think I can make them, because I do not know that I can succeed, after the cross-questioning that has gone on, in doing what it is my main purpose to do, and that is to justify and explain what the Government thought it their duty to do and to do it in such a way as would not cause any misunderstanding or produce an atmosphere which would place difficulties in the way. I will simply say this, that the problems that face us are very grave. The right hon. Gentleman has

spoken of the gravity of the task that lies ahead. There are obstacles in the path, but there are two ways of regarding obstacles. You can regard them as an excuse for abandoning a pre-determined purpose, or you can regard them as merely exciting a *desire to overcome* them. (*Italics are ours*).

Instead of overcoming the obstacles however the obstacles appear to have overwhelmed the Secretary for India on the one side and the Indian leaders on the other. The voice that spoke in the House of Commons from the Government benches grew fainter. When Mr. Benn addressed the same House a few days later, it seemed as if it was not Mr. Wedgwood Benn of over a month ago who was speaking: it was a gramophone of Mr. Lloyd George! This might seem a rather harsh thing to say. Mr. Benn had quickly learned his lessons in Imperialism. He more correctly resumed his Liberal Imperialism. Between the 7th November 1929 and the 18th December, the lion of war had become a dove of peace.

It was fortunate for the Liberals and the Conservatives who are frankly, loudly and uncompromisingly opposed to Indian Home Rule that a Labour back-bencher should have initiated a second Indian debate. If the India Office desired to change the first performance of its Chief, they could not have hit upon a cleverer plan. A Socialist back-bencher—full of enthusiasm for India—became the spokesman of the India Office not by design but by an accident of the ballot. His resolution was something in the nature of a love lyric. It told the Indian people, "you have become—at any rate you are fast becoming good boys. We at this end surely are pleased with your behaviour." That resolution was moved by Mr. Fenner Brockway whose only qualification to speak for

India was that he had the privilege of corresponding with Gandhi. That resolution could have been as facily moved by a Conservative. As the resolution was moved by the Socialist M. P. the Conservative spokesman contented himself with warmly endorsing the Socialist congratulations on India for her showing signs of good behaviour. Mr. Benn himself was pleased to say that Dominion-Status-in-action was already in existence in India! He further declared "Dominion Status had already become part and parcel of the Government of India"¹ And when pray did this miracle take place? "In 1919 at the signing of the treaty of Versailles," vouchsafed Mr. Benn, when, "India became a separate entity and an original member of the League of Nations." This is, of course, the most effective way of belittling India's serious claim to Dominion Status.

If Dominion Status had become in 1919 part and parcel of Indian Government, where was the necessity for the Viceroy to make a new pledge of Dominion Status, in 1929? Where again was the necessity for Lord Reading—who, even on his retirement, appears to feel the burden of Viceregal responsibility on his shoulders!—to address an extraordinary communication to His Majesty's Secretary of State for India, on the eve of the Viceregal proclamation of Dominion Status as "the natural issue" arising from the Montagu Reforms?

Lord Reading's letter which was written on October 27, 1929 has been immortalized by his lordship himself by reading it out to the House of Lords on 5th November 1920 when he tabled a censure motion on the Socialist Government's Indian policy and the Conservative Viceroy's Dominion Status

1. *Hansard*. Wednesday, December 18.

declaration. Lord Reading, who had apparently been taken by the Viceroy on leave and the Socialist Secretary of State for India into confidence, long before the Viceregal proclamation saw the light of day, had objected to it :

The selection of that particular moment immediately after the return of the Viceroy from consultation with the Secretary of State for India and His Majesty's Government and when the Simon Commission was engaged in considering its Report, would lead Indians to the conclusion that the declaration imported a change of policy and brought the final stage of the constitutional development appreciably nearer in point of time.

"I am aware," wrote Lord Reading to Mr. Benn, "*that both you and Lord Irwin maintain that the policy remains unchanged* and that the pronouncement is made merely for the purpose of setting at rest doubts which have arisen in the minds of Indian politicians regarding the meaning of 'responsible government' and the ultimate destiny of India within the Empire. I cannot but think that Indian politicians will believe that the making of the declaration now and without waiting for the Report of the Simon Commission is evidence of a new policy.

"In order to obviate misconception and misinterpretation, may I once more urge that a clear and explicit statement should be made in the pronouncement to the effect that the conditions and reservations in the Declaration of 1917 and the Preamble to the Government of India Act, 1919, continue in their full force. Failing a precise and unequivocal statement of this character, I am convinced that misunderstanding will arise sooner or later in India

and all experience shows that this danger should be most carefully avoided.

"The effect in this country must, I fear, inevitably lead to a serious political controversy which all Parties have desired to exclude in relation to the constitutional position of India. The appointment of the Simon Commission and the selection of its members from the three political Parties with the assent of Parliament led to a general understanding that all questions relating to the constitutional development of India should be postponed until the Commission presented its Report. For the course you are now proposing to take, you have failed to obtain the support of the Liberal Party and, I have reason to believe, of the Conservative Party. So far as I am aware, the Simon Commission has not given its assent. Nevertheless it is intended, as I gather, to proceed immediately and to make the declaration which must be regarded as of capital importance, otherwise it seems inconceivable that Government should persist in the face of the opposition it has met.

"Whatever may be the effect of the Government action in India, *there can be no doubt that in this country and in Parliament there will be an end of the general understanding above mentioned.*" (The italics are ours).

Mr. Wedgwood Benn had claimed in his speech on 7th November 1929 in the Commons that there had been a change in Britain's attitude towards India. On 18th December he denied that any change had taken place! We have already stated that the Socialist Secretary was learning his lessons in Imperialism which his party out of office is never tired of running down.

It might have sounded incredible that a responsible Minister of His Majesty who had boasted that really and truly there was a change—when Mr. Lloyd George heckled him and asked if any change had taken place in regard to the Indian policy of the present Government as distinct from that of its predecessors,—should in less than six weeks have declared that there was no change. To say and straight unsay is the way of Diplomacy. The incredible therefore was bound to take place thanks to Whitehall's traditions. The Socialists, it was evident, had withdrawn from their Indian policy under pressure of the Tory *cum* Liberal Opposition.

The rapidity of the change that swept over Socialism in Whitehall may be recorded in the two voices with which the Secretary of State for India spoke on one and the same subject.

Mr. Benn said once on 7th November 1929:—"HON.

GENTLEMEN SAY, 'HAS THERE BEEN A CHANGE'?.....

I SHOULD SAY THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE."

Mr. Benn said on 18th December 1929:—"THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN POLICY."

It is really difficult to understand why on the eve of the Indian National Congress Mr. Wedgwood Benn should have put himself to the trouble of throwing a wet blanket on the Indian aspirations; why he should have chosen that auspicious occasion to destroy the new-born enthusiasm in India for Dominion Status and British connection.

Ten days after the Secretary of State's statement, the Indian National Congress—whose leaders believing in British good faith had welcomed the new change of which Mr. Benn had spoken on the 7th of November and the Viceroy had anticipated in his statement of November 1st—in disgust and rage, proclaimed that

Britain could not be trusted; that Socialist and Conservative were united in their Imperialist mission of exploitation of India for Britain's prosperity and glory; and that henceforward India should struggle for complete independence, severing every conceivable connexion with England.

Either the Socialist Secretary for India and the Conservative Viceroy should not have made India believe that there was a change of policy; or bravely stuck to it having made India believe both by their proclamation of Dominion Status and the invitation of her leaders to a Round Table Conference in Downing Street. Recalling how the Irish leaders were invited to a conference at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday the 10th of October 1921 India thought that His Majesty's Government had inaugurated a new era of good-will which they meant to crown with the grant of Dominion Status. India was shocked to find that His Majesty's Government meant nothing of the kind. Therefore the Congress decided to have no more to do with any British Party or Government. The Congress delegates burned the Union Jack, unfurled the National Flag, their banner of revolt and shouted on the Christmas day—"long live revolution"—a shout that was heard in London. Newspaper posters advertised that India was on the verge of a tremendous revolt.

The Indian National Congress, the most powerful political organization in the country, openly declared Independence and decided to break with Britain. The method by which it proposed to attain its immediate objective was by adopting Civil Disobedience. This was the terrible weapon it proposed to wield.

This decision of the most militant and courageous section of the politically-minded Indians made British

Socialism indignant as must be obvious to those who had read the interesting outburst of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for India, Earl Russell.

"No one knows better than the Indians that the brave words demanding complete independence are very foolish words," said, Earl Russell, Under-Secretary for India, addressing a meeting of the Cambridgeshire Labour Party in Cambridge yesterday.¹ Dominion status, he said, was not possible at the moment, and would not be for a long time. This country had been guiding India along the road towards democracy. To let go suddenly would be a calamity for India. What would happen, heaven alone knew. It was clear that the Indians did not know. Our fellow-subjects of the Indian Empire had not yet learned to walk, in the matter of Parliamentary government."

More bombastic and insulting words were never uttered,—such was the feeling of the Indian Moderates.

How easily the Indian National Congress could have been prevented from passing the resolution of breaking with the British connexion, felt our Moderates. There must be some party in England which believes in Dominion Status for India. The Socialists,—who promised when they came to office, to provide the "golden link" in the chain of Indo-British connexion,—assumed the same attitude towards India as the Conservatives and the Liberals. India, therefore, it was widely felt, was doomed in British party politics to be the Cinderella of the House of Commons.

Nevertheless it is unfortunate that the National Congress should have in despair decided to cut off all connexion with Britain owing to the folly of the British

1. The *Sunday Times*, January 5, 1930.

Government and the party politicians. There is a power higher than the British parties. That power is the democracy of Britain. If, instead of passing a resolution on Sovereign Independence and burning the boats and the Union Jack, the Congress people had gone to England to educate the English voters on Indian Home Rule, they would have been more prudent and practical. If any party ventures to go to the democratically-minded people of Britain and ask them whether a people different to them in race, culture and colour should be liberated from the yoke of their politicians or should continue to groan under that yoke, the only answer that they would give would be "withdraw that yoke." The parties in England are perfectly certain of that answer. Hence their anxiety to keep India out of live party politics.

The Congress has no faith in British parties who, it says, have all been false to India—but Britain is greater than her parties, cabinets, cabals and camarillas. It is a tragedy that the leaders of the Indian National Congress should have omitted to approach Britain over the heads of parties.

The Congress hastily preferred the short cut of independence. With bleeding feet, its brave men proposed to march to their goal reckless of cost or hazard. The might of the British arms, they said, frightened them not. The prisons had no terror for them. Nor even the gallows. Their Commander-in-Chief was also their saint—Gandhi. A follower of Christ—Gandhi proposed to rise against British Imperialism even as Christ rose against Roman despotism. His was the gospel of non-violent revolt. "Peace hath her victories," felt he.

While Gandhi was treading the path for non-violent non-co-operation, the revolutionary was preparing

the road of revolution.¹ And the attitude of the man-in-the-street in England is one of supreme indifference to Gandhi and the revolutionary alike.

The cartoon in *Punch* of January 8, 1930, represents the British ignorance of the Indian situation. India is painted by *Punch* as the elephant. From the thickest jungle emerges the tiger—Revolution. "Come and join us," says the tiger to the elephant. "Not me," says the wise elephant, "I know too much about the jungle."

The Indian elephant has not accepted the invitation of the revolutionary tiger. It is a tame elephant. "The call of the old chaos," as *Punch* puts it, inspires it not.

1. See my book "India, Peace or War," Harraps, London.

CHAPTER II

THE TIGER AND THE ELEPHANT

"How better, in this time of anxious questioning and perplexed policy, could we show our confidence in the principles of liberty, as the sources as well as the expression of life, how better could we demonstrate our own self-possession and steadfastness in the courses of justice and disinterestedness than by thus going calmly forward to fulfil our promises to a dependent people, who will look more anxiously than ever to see whether we have indeed the liberality, the unselfishness, the courage, the faith we have boasted and professed."—

Woodrow Wilson: December 1914

Punch like the average Briton may be inclined to belittle the importance of Gandhi and the Congress. *Punch* does not stand alone amongst the organs of the press in so underestimating their power or worth. *Punch* at least has the legitimate excuse of a humourist. Its purpose is to raise a laugh. That purpose was fully and faithfully served by the cartoon to which reference was made in the foregoing chapter.

Punch's joke about the elephant and the tiger will be appreciated not only by Englishmen but also by Indians. The revolutionaries will take it as a tribute to their ferocity. One of them had already scorned the 'vegetarian' policy of Gandhi. His 'non-violent revolution' reminded them of 'vegetarian tigers'—a figure of speech which appealed to as high an authority as the late Lord Brentford who quoted it with approval in one of his essays on India which the *Morning Post* of November 2, 1929, published under the flaring three-column heading "Letting the Tiger Loose in India." With prophetic foresight, Viscount

Brentford who, as Sir William Joynson-Hicks, was the Home Secretary in the last Conservative Government, wrote in the official organ of his party just a few weeks before the attempt was made to wreck the Viceregal special train carrying Lord and Lady Irwin.¹

"And now it seems that the Government is moving in the direction of Dominion Home Rule"—a move which will not be accepted for one single moment by the Extremists—"one of whom wrote sometime ago that you might as well speak of a non-violent revolutionary as of a vegetarian tiger."

The non-violent revolutionaries however, exist in India. They have still a majority in the Indian National Congress whose creed is the attainment of independence by peaceful and non-violent means. How long the Congress will tread the path of peace yet remains to be seen. So long as its leadership is retained by Gandhi, its creed will remain unchanged. So far, Gandhi has resisted the attempt of the violent revolutionary to alter the Congress creed. Up to now he has successfully prevented the Congress from following the tiger's lead.

The method of the tiger is different from the method of the elephant, but their goal is the same. Their goal is the attainment of independence. Not because independence is better than Dominion Status, but, in the opinion of the Congress and the revolutionary, independence is easier to attain than Dominion Status! Dominion Status cannot be attained without the good will of Britain, her sympathy, her sanction but independence can be achieved with the sanction of the Indian people alone!!

1. See *India: Peace or War*.

CHAPTER III

CRUSADE AGAINST GANDHI

".....a barbarous noise environs me
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs"

Milton.

On 4th January 1930, there appeared in the *Daily Mail*, under a four-column headline in thick black type "**Digging our grave in India,**" from the pen of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, formerly Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, a furiously polemical article attacking Mahatma Gandhi. Sir Michael O'Dwyer has apparently not forgiven Gandhi. Sir Michael O'Dwyer's recall, the Indian National Congress demanded after the shooting in Amritsar and the subsequent Martial Law regime in the Punjab. Under the *de facto* leadership of Gandhi, when the Congress met in Amritsar, the sacred city of the Punjab, not long ago, the administration of Sir Michael O'Dwyer was condemned in strong speeches. No Indian will, therefore, attach any importance to the angry outburst of Sir Michael O'Dwyer of all people against our Mahatmaji. Sir Michael O'Dwyer puts in the mouth of a mysterious Irish Nationalist: "That man is the biggest impostor." Gandhi, at any rate, is honoured in his own country. He is also honoured by thousands of people in Asia and America, also in Great Britain and Sir Michael O'Dwyer's own country, Ireland.

To call Gandhi "an impostor" is the limit. Only a spiteful enemy can use that language. The late Edwin Montagu, the then Secretary of State for India, was happy to refer to Gandhi in his famous

speech in Parliament in May, 1919, as his "friend"; as "a very great and distinguished Indian, a man of the highest motives and finest character, a man who has deserved well of his country both in India and outside it." ¹

The worst that can be said against Gandhi by a political opponent is contained in these words of warning uttered by a responsible British critic: ²

"That veteran saint (whose motives it is doubtless impious to analyse, but whose activities it may none the less be a duty to resist) has apparently once more convinced himself, in spite of bitter experience to the contrary in the past, that non-co-operation and non-violence are compatible terms. Can the hot-heads be sure that there will not be another orgy of penitence and self-disgust on his part when the blood begins to flow?.....If Gandhi throws down the torch as soon as he feels the scorch of it on his soul, it may not make much difference; others many pick it up."

The *New Statesman* which is one of the most devout opponents of Gandhi and the Congress wrote on January 4 1930:—

"Gandhi is the Mahatma, the Messiah of India, possessing almost all over India an influence such as has never been possessed before by any one man since the British occupation first began in the 18th century. He alone makes the Congress party really important."

Knowledge of Gandhi's power compelled the *New Statesman* to ask the British Government and the Government of India to boycott Gandhi and his fellow-boycotters. It had a poor opinion of Lord Irwin

1. Edwin Montagu's Speeches.

2. "Nation and Athenaeum" in its issue of 4th January 1930.

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who could not be trusted to do anything so heroic. "The present Viceroy," it wrote, "is evidently not the man for the job. He is indiscriminately conciliatory."

The *Daily Mail*, of course, wanted the Labour Government to recall Lord Irwin and send out Mr. Winston Churchill to India "to govern"! This journal, however, forgot that a truly Socialist Government would much rather send out George Lansbury to liquidate the Empire in India! But Lansbury is getting old and 'Socialism in our times' is yet a cry in the wilderness.

That the *New Statesman*, a semi-Socialist weekly, should have taken an unsympathetic line only discloses the amount of hostility that prevails in Indian circles against Indian aspirations. In the opinion of the *New Statesman*: "We cannot give democracy and Self-Government to India.

"What is needed at the moment—and for the next ten years or so—is a very firm Government which will ignore the extremists—will in fact boycott the boycotters—and at the same time press forward resolutely with such constitutional reforms and advances as circumstances may seem to render practicable. At all events it is time for the ending of the misunderstandings or the pusillanimities which have been displayed by successive British Governments during the last twelve years. We must continue really to govern India until we have taught her to govern herself, and throughout the whole of the long lesson we must continue to show her what Government means."

If this advice is seriously followed by the Government, there will not be a single co-operator left in India—the politicians, one and all, would embrace the creed of boycott—and by boycotting the boycotters, Britain would have boycotted India herself.

That is not the way of wisdom. That is the optimism of ignorance. That is a proposal to lose India. The more statesmanlike course will be to prepare India for Dominion Status by a rapid Indianization all round including the officers in the Indian Army. Without Home Defence there can be no true Home Rule. *What India wants is not mere civil and constitutional reforms but also the creation of an Indian Army and Navy officered by Indians themselves.* And when such an Army is created, England can safely decrease her military burdens and the money so saved can be used for mitigating the rigours of unemployment.

All wise Englishmen who realize that India has to be conciliated, that the Indian problem has to be solved, that the policy of forcing an impossible alien rule on an unwilling people cannot endure, admit that this is no time to force the Government to persist in a programme of reaction and repression. But the irreconcilables still continue to clamour for Lord Irwin's head. They feel today exactly as the *Daily Mail* which wrote on 4th January 1930 :—

“So long as Conservatives and the shadow Cabinet afford Lord Irwin direct or indirect countenance, they are hopelessly compromising their party in the country and endangering vital national interests in India. The effect of their mistake and his weakness is to be seen in the growing violence of the agitation for Dominion Status by the Indian revolutionaries, which has already had an alarming reaction on Indian credit. Indian gilt-edged securities have fallen to a 6 per cent. basis, and *if the policy of weakness be maintained at Delhi will degenerate into mere gambling counters.*

The appointment of Lord Irwin is not the only blunder which the late Government committed in

Indian affairs. By abolishing the tea duty it deprived India of a preference which was of real value, and thus caused not unreasonable resentment in India without any intelligible excuse.

Lord Irwin's Government accepted the principle of "discriminating protection." This principle of protection India wants to apply against all outsiders—be they within or outside the Empire. The Indian industries are in their infancy. The merest tyro in economics, even a full-flooded free trader, will admit that protection is necessary for a country whose industries are in their embryonic stage. When however Indian industries reach their adolescence and can compete with Empire industries on equal terms, India will agree to Empire preference or free trade within the Empire. And that agreement can be reached, even then, only on one condition that India enjoys the same status and autonomy as the Dominions enjoy. The Rothermere press which has been conducting a merciless war on India's right to freedom cannot expect India to support its pet scheme of Empire free trade.

It is amusing to note that the *Daily Mail* will not accept Mr. Baldwin's agreement to the new tariff policy propounded by its master. It wrote on 8th January 1930:

"Before he touches the new tariff policy Mr. Baldwin has to tell the voters precisely what communication he made to Lord Irwin in the matter of India. What the public does know is that Mr. Baldwin's premature and ill-considered assent to Lord Irwin's promise of Dominion Status was the crowning blunder in a career of blunders. It slighted the Simon Commission. It immensely encouraged the extremists. It dealt a grave blow at Great Britain and the Empire. What the after-

effects will be no man can say. The Indian crisis is not over."

No, the Indian crisis is not over. It has only begun. Every Indian must be grateful to the Rothermere press for its vociferous campaign against India. England had slept long on the Indian problem. When India was burning, the Neros of Whitehall were fiddling.

The average English voter—usually ill-informed about India—thought that all was well with India; that Indians had acquiesced in British Rule; that they no longer talked of Home Rule much less dreamt of independence. The *Daily Mail* campaign on the danger in India has produced an effect which Gandhi could not have created had he and his Congress spent a crore of rupees on propaganda in England. The freedom-loving Englishman has naturally begun to say: "If Indians want Home Rule, it is but natural. Having given Ireland Home Rule, so near to us and with so many objections to having an Independent Ireland in our neighbourhood, we cannot with any justice deny India Home Rule."

CHAPTER IV

IRELAND—AND INDIA.

"Without freedom all these great concessions are practically valueless, or at any rate such value as they do possess is to be found in the fact that they strengthen the aim of the Irish people to push on to the great goal of national independence.....I have come here to-day to America to ask you to give us your aid in a supreme and I believe a final effort to dethrone once and for all the English Government of our country."

Mr. Redmond in October 1910.*

"Sometimes isolated incidents are like history read by flashes of lightning," wrote Mr. J. L. Garvin in the *Sunday Observer* on December 29, 1929. The great journalist was brooding over the processional entry into Lahore of Gandhi and the Congress President led by a drum and fife band playing 'the old Irish rebel song,' the *Wearing of the green*. "To have that song carried from Hibernia to the Punjab is one of the extraordinary episodes of all history." Mr. Garvin is right.

Another striking episode which escaped Mr. Garvin but which has a close resemblance to the Irish situation when it emerged from Dominion Status to Independence also occurred at Lahore. That was the entry of Gandhi on the Independence stage. Less than a decade ago, when the Indian National Congress met on the Christmas Day in Gandhi's

**The Revolution in Ireland (p. 57)*

By W. Alison Phillips (Longmans, Green & Co., 1923).

capital, Ahmedabad, a Mohamedan leader of Cawnpore, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, had moved that the peaceful creed of the Congress should be changed, its non-violence must yield place to militant action and the goal should henceforth be not Home Rule but Independence. Gandhi resisted this Mohamedan leader who was then at the height of his fame. Mohani was subsequently arrested and tried for his speech, for justifying and preaching violence, and given two years. Gandhi then had some faith in Britain yet. He believed in Home Rule and British connexion. He waited for ten years. Britain gave no indication of granting India early Home Rule.

On the constitutional question, Britain had bungled by sending out an all white Commission under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon to enquire into India's fitness for Home Rule. Indian Nationalists, boycotted the Commission and scorned the idea of an enquiry into their fitness for Home Rule. Gandhi who had the patience of Job began to feel that young India was justified in feeling that it was incompatible with her dignity and aspiration to ask for colonial autonomy. The resurrection of India must come from within. Freedom will not be granted as a Christmas gift. Therefore Gandhi definitely joined the Independence movement. Many others who had stood with him hitherto for British connexion went forward into the fray.

Who does not recall how the Irish Home Rulers joined Sinn Fein, disgusted with the delay on the part of England to grant Ireland Home Rule? The same thing was happening in India. Says Mr. Alison Phillips who contributed the article on the recent political history of Ireland to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (twelfth edition): "Mr. Redmond, who found himself fraternising with that redoubtable

patriot, Patrick Ford, ex-dynamite, and editor of the *Irish World*, occasionally fell or was forced into an extreme strain." While Redmond never seriously took up the leadership of the Irish Independence movement, Gandhi definitely assumed it.

The Socialist Government which was a pendulum between Conservatism and Liberalism could not show the courage necessary to give to India what Lloyd George gave Ireland. But many Socialists felt that it would be utter bankruptcy of British statesmanship which would lay down that India must pass through the same gory stages before she reached the goal of Home Rule.

"Amongst the many millions of our new electorate, hardly one in a thousand has the vaguest knowledge of India," wrote Mr. J. L. Garvin¹. Ignorance can be no excuse for the performance of their duty. The Government of India is responsible not to an Indian electorate but to the British electorate. Here is a mighty opponent of Indian aspirations who bases his opposition on the ignorance of the electorate. That ignorance, however, is India's best justification for asking for the immediate transfer of that responsibility from the British to the Indian electorate. That ignorance and the impossibility of educating a distant electorate, including the myriads of flappers on the dull boring problem of India's constitutional rights can never be removed. Why should a British voter worry about Indians and their desires and ambitions and difficulties and grievances? We do not blame the British electorate for not taking the trouble to understand or study the Indian problem. But India cannot allow her enemies in England to deny her her God-given right to freedom on the unjustifiable ground of British ignorance.

1 In *The Observer* of December 24, 1929.

"Between Calcutta and the Khyber Pass," observes Mr. Garvin, "one analogy springs repeatedly to the eye—a certain resemblance to Ireland as it was not long ago with its racial and sectarian rivalries, its imaginative ardour and its emotional vehemence applied to a Nationalist agitation." No purpose will be served by emphasising unduly the sectarian and racial rivalries. A century of such extravagant emphasis did not avail Britain in the long run. She had to settle the Irish problem.

Any such delay, any such timorousness in approaching the Indian problem will only result in the loss of India to the Empire. For as Mr. Garvin himself admits, "The Indian question is like the former Irish question, except that it is a hundred times larger and a thousand times more complicated, with imaginative emotionalism capable of working itself up to far higher pressure and with explosive possibilities in proportion."¹ Therefore if India goes the first way, India cannot be saved as Ireland could be, for Britain and the Empire.

Mr. Garvin says: "Those who are unable to perceive the peculiar force of the analogy between India and Ireland are blind indeed ; and the analogy teaches what to avoid"—namely delay ; repression ; faith in the use of force to coerce a nation determined to come into its own.

Mr. Garvin, however, called for resolute government; for repression ; for putting down Gandhi and the Congress. He quoted a masterly thinker with approval: "For every war we have waged in India, we have prevented twenty. In this spirit and in the calm nobility of it, we must hold strongly to our duty, unhurried and undismayed."

Mr. Garvin has no substitute in India for the Pax Britannica. He has no doubt for many generation

1 Ibid.

there will be no substitute—unless indeed our weakness and India's disaster are followed some day by the restoration of peace under other rulers after the extinction of freedom." A grosser misreading of Indian history never was and never could be. When civil wars were besmirching the fair fame of England, peace and plenty reigned in India. Through shining scores of centuries, India has been self-governing. From millennium to millennium, India's culture and civilization, the valour of her heroes, the songs of her poets and the dramas of Kalidas and Bhavabhuti and the flight in the realms of philosophy of Sankara, Ramanuja and Buddha shed a serene lustre over the world. The grant of Dominion Status did not mean extinction of freedom in South Africa, in Ireland and in Canada. The War of Independence did not bring to the United States disaster and eternal woe. "God's Englishmen," to use Milton's phrase, are apt to exaggerate their importance to India. If England withdraws, they say, India will be lost in chaos! The tragedy—or is it the comedy—of the whole situation is that even gifted and informed men in England are unwilling to recognize a half-way house between complete independence and present domination.

The extreme Nationalist with abundant faith in the capacity of his own countrymen—despairing that any good would ever come of parleying with England—no wonder, decided to break with Britain. He is perfectly confident of achieving what Ireland has failed to achieve—Sovereign Independence.

"More and more Sinn Fein has become the model for that fervently extreme school of Hindu nationalism which is now beginning an intense effort to prevail," says Garvin. True. Very true. And the reason for this transformation is not far to seek. The Nationalists after years of constitutional agitation and a study of the manner in which England has yielded power to

its dependencies decided to pursue the same methods.

"The playing of the 'Wearing of the green' in Lahore is no freak," remarked Garvin soon after the Lahore Congress. "The tune has been deliberately adopted as an anthem of the Congress. It implies an attempt to imitate the Irish model right through ; and to go further if possible up to complete independence." It was an endeavour to hasten the day when Indian sepoys would refuse to shoot Indians down as they did under Dyer's order in Amritsar. Tremendous significance attached in Britain's eye therefore to Gandhi's alliance with the Sikhs—who fought the British battles in India and helped Britain to found her Empire in India—an alliance which naturally caused quite a flutter in the Tory doves.

The *Morning Post*—the strength of whose resistance to Indian demands for Home Rule is equalled only by its deep insight into the baffling intricacies and appreciation of the terrific possibilities of Indian movements—saw danger in the Gandhi-Sikh alliance. It published on January 6, 1930, the portraits of Sirdar Kharak Singh and Gandhi, "each formidable in his own way," as its special correspondent put it, who came to an ominous understanding at Lahore. Its 'special correspondent' described Gandhi as "the leader of the Swarajya movement who believed or pretends to believe in obtaining independence for India by non-violence.

"Kharak Singh, on the other hand, is called by his admirers the "uncrowned king of the Sikhs," that warlike sect from a large part of the Indian Army is recruited."

"The Gandhi picture suggests the physical debility and the mental cunning of the down-country

Hindu of the bania (or money-lending) caste to which he belongs. The Kharak Singh portrait indicates the courage and simplicity of a race of landowning cultivator-warriors.

"The bania has always exploited the Sikh, and this present alliance is probably no exception to that rule, for the Sikh will have the blows and the bania the half-pence of the arrangement.

"Sirdar Kharak Singh is a leader of great importance in the Punjab, ex-President of the Provincial Congress, of the Central Sikh League and of the Akali Dal (Volunteer Forces), and President of the Sikh Temple Committee. The Akali Sikhs, of whom he is a leader, are an aggressive faction; they have secured the control of the Sikh Temple funds, and are therefore in a strong position. They have behind them also a large number of ex-soldiers of the Indian Army and probably also the remnant of that Ghadr Rebellion which was crushed in 1915.

"The Congress Party had antagonised these Sikhs in the Nehru Constitution, which was called an 'insult' by Kharak Singh. 'Follow me,' he exclaimed, 'and I shall carry the flag of Indian freedom. If you find a bullet in my back don't count me among the Sikhs.'

"It was in this spirit that the Akali Sikhs marched on Lahore. Although a tiny fraction in the population of India the claim of their leaders was for a commanding share in any form of government that might be coming, and their intention was to force their views upon the Congress, if necessary with the cold steel of their *kirpans*.

"Kharak Singh and his Sikhs marched into Lahore with this intention on December 29 last,

to the number of at least ten thousand, some afoot, some on horseback, and some on camels, the Sirdar himself riding on an elephant. They marched in fighting array, with their gleaming knives unsheathed, to the pipes and drums of a band of ex-soldiers; a collision with police and Gurkhas was averted by the tact of the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police, and the formidable invaders made their bivouac under the walls of the old Fort.

"While the Congress was going on Gandhi and the Sirdar held a secret conference, and on December 30 Kharak Singh announced that he had made satisfactory terms for his people.

"Kharak Singh (says Reuter) therefore advised the Sikhs to work for complete independence."

We have in fairness to the extreme opponents of Indian aspirations reproduced the *Morning Post's* version of the entente between the warlike Sikhs and the intellectual politicians. Some of the picturesque untruths in it, however, must be exposed. To suggest 'physical debility' in Gandhi is ridiculous. Gandhi is a typical Indian saint. Like all Indian saints he starves the body and feeds the soul. He eats most sparingly. He is a slight figure but "strong in will to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield." To insinuate mental cunning on the part of Gandhi is childish. He places all his cards on the table. He believes in open diplomacy. He took no advantage of Lord Irwin's difficulties to fulfil his pledge saying: "His Excellency has cheated us." He carried a resolution in the last session of the Congress in the teeth of extremist opposition appreciating Lord Irwin's sincerity. But Lord Irwin did not go far enough for Gandhi's purposes. Lord Irwin's pledge—though misconstrued by myriads—only vouchsafed Dominion Status in stages. Gandhi wanted it forth-

with. However Lord Irwin's moderation and caution—though misrepresented for party purposes by his and Mr. Baldwin's detractors in the British press—did not induce Gandhi to rejoice, as the Congress extremists openly rejoiced, in the attempt to wreck his train and murder the Viceroy, Lady Irwin, and the staff. Gandhi's devotion to non-violence has never been a make-believe, but a part and parcel of his faith. Non-violence, in fact, is his religion. He is verily the Buddha of this age. Millions of Indians look upon him as the incarnation of Buddha. To insinuate that Gandhi "pretends to believe in non-violence" is sinister. Out of his tremendous sincerity and devotion to non-violence arose his resolution—which startled the revolutionaries of the Congress denouncing "the dastardly outrage" as he put it—and the same words, be it noted, were used by Mr. Wedgwood Benn, His Majesty's Secretary for India, in Parliament. It was again because of his religious devotion to the creed of *Ahimsa* that he threatened to leave the Congress if his resolution was defeated. Thus the National Congress—though only by a majority—stood by Gandhi in the condemnation of the revolutionary attempt to assassinate the Viceroy and Lady Irwin.

The suggestion that the Sikhs would have the blows and Gandhi and his caste the benefits thereof marks more anger than a calm reasoning mood. Gandhi has never shirked fight. He has never proved a deserter. He always put himself in the forefront of the strife. His rebel soul delights in suffering. His faith in suffering is a result of his daily attempt to live up to the teachings of the Jesus of Nazareth. The teachings of Christ, according to Gandhi, are nothing if they are not 'lived up to'. Christ, in Gandhi's opinion, does not want the

parroting of his sayings but expect of his followers to embody them in their lives which would speak louder than the loudest of sermons. Gandhi's life has been a sermon on suffering and sacrifice. "Sell all and follow me" is his message to his disciples. Perhaps 'disciples' is a bad phrase to use in connexion with the followers of Gandhi. He does not recognize in them—their number is legion—even one disciple. That is the disappointment of his would-be disciples including one of them who hopes to live in history as Johnson's Boswell by treasuring up the unrecorded utterances of his Master.

As for the attack in the British press about the antagonising of the Sikhs by the Nehru report, it must be admitted that the report was a production of arm-chair politicians like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. An adventure in the realms of constitution-making its aim was to unite the moderates and the extremists, the revolutionary and the reactionary. It attempted to make the lion and the lamb good bed-fellows. Instead of cheating the world about the dawn of an Utopia in India of a united political movement whose angelic votaries had ceased to differ among themselves, the authors cheated themselves into imagining that they had performed the greatest miracle of history. Some of them probably imagined that they could confound Britain and their own dissentient countrymen with a phrase ! That phrase was given to the report which was advertised in the Moderate *cum* Extremist press as the "All Parties Report." Its life was fixed for one year. Their offspring was murdered in the Congress at Lahore under the presidency of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

This report did not produce unity. It produced chaos. The astute moderates made use of it to rehabi-

litate their position in the country and their emissaries in England went on a pilgrimage to Whitehall to get out of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's Government the offer of a Round Table Conference, the price for which—in the shape of resistance to Gandhi and the independence movement—they were willing to pay. They got the Conference and prepared for resistance.

But the secession of the moderates from the Congressmen seemed more than compensated by the alliance of Gandhi with Sikhs. The moderates have been noted for their flight from every brave fight. The Sikhs on the other hand have been noted for their love of the fight. Gandhi meant fight. He had no use for book-worms and constitution-makers. He wanted soldiers.

The Conservative die-hards were disgusted to read of the Gandhi-Sikh alliance. Their views reflected in the *Morning Post* in an editorial under the significant title, "An ominous alliance." It asked Mr. Wedgwood Benn as Hamlet asked his mother to look upon the two pictures which it published—the one

like a mildew'd ear,

Blasting his wholesome brother—

and to ask himself—Can, or should, these two really belong to one nation? Naturally, they are as the poles apart, on the one side, the Sikh, of Scythian ancestry, fair, open-browed, valiant—

the front of Jove himself,

An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;

"The other swarthy, secretive, degenerate, scheming. By the one we are attracted; from the other we are repelled: the one might be a brother of general Nicholson; the other could not be even the most

distant relative of any Norman or Anglo-Saxon. The pictures help us to understand that, if the Aryan is planted in the North, the Dravidian swarms towards the South, so that the Punjabi looks upon the Englishman as his kin in comparison with the "Kala admi," the black man of Lower India. These same Sikhs, once our brave enemies, were made by British policy our constant friends. It was they and the British soldiers who together quelled the Mutiny of an Army recruited in Lower India; and, while Bengal raised hardly a man, one in every fourteen of the Sikh population served under the British flag in the Great War."

This is in parts the language of rage. It is just as well, we quote it. However unjust the reflections on Gandhi and his less martial associates—their being less martial is a result of the British Government policy of confining recruitment to the army to the non-politically-minded classes—the knowledge of the terrific possibilities of the alliance was responsible for its wrath.

By confining the recruitment of soldiers to the Sikhs and Pathans of the Punjab and the Gurkhas and by demobilizing the Bengalee army in the East which under the Command of Mir Jaffar betrayed Siraj-ud-Doulah and helped Clive, the Maharatta army in the South West which fought Aurangzeb and had produced heroes like Sivaji and the armies of South India which fought the battles of Tippu and Hyder Ali,—the British Government had hoped to keep the Army in India out of the political whirlpool and thus avoid a successful revolution which has been from time to time threatened. This time, however, Gandhi's approach of the martial Sikhs, it was apprehended, would affect the age-old policy of Britain. Hence the wrath of the Imperialists and Conservatives.

What have the British Government done to conciliate the Sikhs, asks the *Morning Post*: "The Constitution prepared by Nehru gave no place to the Sikhs as a loyal minority, with the result that the Sikhs marched upon Lahore, and might there, had the Viceroy raised a finger, have helped him to prevent an incipient rebellion. But the British Government made no sign, and Sardar Kharak Singh, a formidable Sikh leader, has made his terms with Gandhi, and has advised his people to fight for complete independence. What a terrible reflection upon British policy that it has forced these two alien minds together!"*

The British Imperialists apprehended that so long as the Sikhs were the vanguard of Gandhi's army, the Independence spirit might percolate into the ranks of the most powerful, the most ferocious and hitherto the most loyal section of the Indian army.

It was further feared by right-minded Englishmen that so long as the Sikhs were not given adequate weightage by way of representation in the Government of India and the Punjab, so long there could be no satisfactory settlement of the Sikh problem; and as the Irish revolutionaries exploited the grievances of a clan or community, so would the Indian agitators exploit the Sikh grievance to strengthen their campaign against the Raj.

Exploitation of the religious feelings and sentiments is one way. Exploitation of the strong feelings about personal injustices is another. And exploitation of the economic grievances is the third. It is in these three ways that the Indian leaders of the Congress school pave the way. The Government

*The *Morning Post*, dated 26th January, 1930.

could not successfully resist the Congress tide, because the aforesaid grievances in the country could not really be abolished in a hurry, if at all. There is no country in the world in which the people are devoid of grievances. It is customary in all countries to hold the Government responsible for popular discontents. In countries where responsible Governments and party politics prevail, the party-in-power is held responsible for the ills of the day. In India, however, in the absence of responsible Government, the permanent services who constitute the powers-that-be, the irremovable official executive responsible to Britain and not India is naturally held responsible for the innumerable grievances of the people. There is no use of protesting against the growing hatred of British officialdom in India. They have been so long its permanent rulers. The people are the permanent opposition. And in an agricultural country, it is easy to hold the Government responsible for the economic grievances—the seedplot of upheavals.

“Political agitation in Ireland,” says a high authority,¹ “whatever sentiment may be behind it, has always derived its main driving force from the real or imaginary economic grievances of the mass of the people.” This is the outstanding fact that favours the extremists in an agricultural country like India where the good harvest is dependent mainly if not wholly on the monsoon.

The British bureaucracy in India cannot regulate the monsoon any more than Whitehall can regulate the weather in England. Even when the monsoon is favourable in one part of India, it is not necessarily

1. *The Revolution in Ireland* (page 47). By W. Alison Phillips.

favourable in another part. When there is a general failure of the monsoon, woe to the alien rule.

How long can the Government base its popularity on the charity of the weather or the freaks of nature?

No wonder, men like Lord Irwin recognise that the alien rule in India must cease—alike in the interest of the alien and the Indian. Make the Government responsible to the people and India would be more loyal to England than she is to-day.

On the 27th of November, 1910, Mr. John Redmond defined his demands for Ireland as *a Parliament elected by the Irish people, with an executive responsible to it, and with full control of purely Irish affairs.*¹ This was not independence. This did not mean a 'clean cut.' All it conveyed was national independence in the internal affairs of Ireland. Another way of putting it is Dominion Status—which in Lord Irwin's words is "the natural issue" in India to-day with which Britain is faced. Must Britain lose India? Then it had only to promise, pause, prepare, postpone and end by playing into the hands of its enemies. If England wanted to keep India as a friend and an equal partner of the Empire, it had only to embody the spirit of the Irwin-Gandhi pact in the new constitution.

Mr. Garvin who understood the direction in which the Indian tide flowed wrote: "The superficial calculation, no doubt, is that political guerilla called Civil Disobedience in support of a cry for Independence will force in 1930 such concessions, very nearly amounting to the total separation of the larger part of Ireland, as were made to Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins."² The Editor of the *Observer* consoled himself with the thought that "happily, in this atmosphere of emotional

1. *Ibid*, page 58.

2. The *Observer* dated December 29, 1929.

insanity, the policy of Civil Disobedience is not to come into immediate action. It is a suspended threat." Was this much of a consolation? Suppose the Indian leaders were not able to carry out their threat that year or the next year? Suppose even that they were not able successfully to carry out that threat at all? Could it be an excuse for denying and delaying the grant of freedom to India? Can statesmanship take shelter under an excuse? The very fact that the threat hung like the sword of Damocles was enough for the purpose of the agitation. So long as the threat was held out, so long the peoples' allegiance was given not to Britain but to their own leaders ready to do and dare. Imagine what it meant to British prestige in the East—whatever was left of it after years of blundering? Imagine how every day, every month, every year, the hatred of Britain increased in India. The best way to defeat the cause of Dominion Status and strengthen the movement for independence was to ridicule India's fitness for Self-Government as the late Earl Russel, Socialist Under-Secretary for India ridiculed.

CHAPTER V

A CANDID OUTBURST

"Opinion! which on crutches walks,
And sounds the words another talks."

Lloyd—THE POET.

"Opinion's but a fool, that makes us scan
The outward habit by the inward man."

Shakespeare—PERICLES.

In a previous chapter, a speech on Indian Home Rule by the late Lord Russel at Cambridge in his capacity as Parliamentary Under-Secretary for India was briefly referred to. The late Earl Russel—from the present writer's conversation with him—convinced him to be a man perfectly straightforward in the expression of his opinion—one who hated hypocrisy, double-dealing and the dubious ways of bureaucracies and politicians habituated to saying a thing and meaning another or meaning a thing and saying another. The attack that was levelled against the Socialist Government by its Conservative and Liberal critics at home and the Indian National Congress and independent critics abroad was based on their belief that their Indian policy lacked straightness, was too nebulous, too circuitous. Mr. Wedgwood Benn, the Minister in charge of Indian affairs, was accused of playing with words. He said in the House of Commons that "there had been no change of policy but there was of course a great change in procedure. That was the calling of the Conference."¹

1. *Hansard*, Wednesday, December 18, 1930.

He further explained that the Conference must be clothed with full knowledge by which he was supposed to have meant that it should represent all classes, cliques, coteries, the conflicting elements of a sub-continent of Asia.

Meantime Gandhi who had a talk with the Viceroy in the late President Patel's house as to what exactly the Indian representatives and the representatives of the British Government were going to do in the Round Table Conference was told that its object was to arrive at the greatest common measure of agreement. Had Mr. de Valera been told so by Mr. Lloyd George, the Conference that settled the Irish problem would never have been held. Gandhi probably felt like Mr. de Valera. Gandhi went to the Congress at Lahore, took up its leadership from inexperienced hands and following the policy of the late Arthur Griffith induced the Congress to declare Independence as the goal of its policy. It was this resolution that Earl Russel characterised as "foolish."

Gandhi's principal colleague, the late Pundit Motilal Nehru, leader of the Congress Parliamentary group, called on his followers to resign their seats in the Legislatures, because it was not honourable for men who stood out for independence to continue as members of Parliament, admission to which was gained only after the solemn affirmation of the oath of allegiance to His Majesty the King, his heirs and successors. The Pundit obviously suspended this allegiance. This policy of boycotting the Councils in the Provinces and the Central Legislature made Lord Russel exclaim that Indians were infants who did not know the A. B. C. of Parliamentary Government. He ridiculed them as trying to run before they had learned to walk. He was thus giving public expression to what the India Office was privately feeling. This was

considered rather tactless by some adepts in the art of diplomacy. Why blurt out the crudest truth so early in the day? Let the Indian politicians walk into the Socialist parlour. Why take away the inducement which the spider of the fable offered to the fly?

Lord Russel's public expression of Whitehall's opinion became a subject for consultation between the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for India. The Moderates in India who had publicly agreed to defy and defeat the Independence movement cabled to their friends in England and protested in the Indian newspapers against Lord Russel's "outburst"; that they were bound to withdraw their assent to attend the Indo-British Conference in London; that Lord Russel had unsaid what his chief Mr. Wedgwood Benn had said; that his Lordship had gone back on the Irwin policy of establishing Dominion Status in India.

The Moderates' interpretation of the policy of Lord Irwin was different from Whitehall's. That policy was more in harmony with the views that were held in the India Office to which Lord Russel honestly gave vent. But it was a premature speech. Such an expression of opinion would have been tactless even in Conference!

For strategic reasons, Lord Russel was asked by his chief to issue a mild contradiction. The Moderates in India had to be appeased; therefore the contradiction was necessary. The Tories at home had also to be satisfied; therefore the original speech was equally necessary. While the speech was crystal-clear, the contradiction was ambiguous. Earl Russel was equivocating.

Earl Russel issued the following amusing contradiction to the Press in the shape of a message to the people of India:

"The summary of my speech cabled to India has been so abridged as to make it most misleading.

"A fuller report would convince even my worst critics that I pleaded for co-operation in the best interests of England and India.

"My whole speech was devoted to explaining the position in India to those Britishers who had not the time to make a study of it. I never used the phrase "Dominion Status is not possible for a long time." What I actually said was that the evolution of democratic institutions had taken a long time in our own country, and even now was not perfect.

"I hoped that, with the co-operation of Indians, we might be able to evolve a workable scheme in the best interests of all, and in this matter the Labour Party was absolutely sincere.

"I hope my Indian friends will not be misguided by such misleading reports. I deplore the attitude of the Congress as much as I deplore the attitude of the Tories and their Press, who are causing the present embarrassment, and I trust my Indian friends will rally round the proposals of Lord Irwin, than whom there is no better friend of India."*

The above contradiction only confirmed the denial of any idea on the part of the Socialist Government of the immediate grant of Home Rule to India. Lord Russel was of opinion that 'the evolution of democratic institutions' had taken centuries in England and India had to wait patiently in the corridor of time for the ultimate evolution of a self-governing democracy. This was stipulated in the preamble to the Government of India Act which was the policy of Parliament and of the Socialist Government.

*The *Times*, January 9, 1930.

India did not misunderstand Lord Russel. Only the Nationalist and Congress leaders used his speech for effectively exposing the Moderates as living and loving to live in a fool's paradise. After congratulating India on the frank disclosure of the cabinet views in regard to India and praising Lord Russel himself on blurting out "the unvarnished truth," the Congress Party leader issued the following communique:—

"Let the Liberals and other wise men who want to enter the Councils to achieve independence derive such consolation as they may from the Under-Secretary's explanations.

"Congress will not be affected by them. We have come to the parting of the ways. It will serve no useful purpose to ridicule Congress, which will not be deflected. Swaraj cannot be attained by a boycott of the Legislatures alone. The law courts, educational institutions, and Government services should also be boycotted with a view to paralysing the Government, but a boycott of the services is impossible of success at present. Congress selected the Council boycott in the first instance because it is inseparably connected with independence and civil disobedience."

The Calcutta correspondent of the *Times* cabled as follows about the effect in India of Lord Russel's speech:

"Calcutta, January 8. The report of Lord Russel's speech at Cambridge, while disconcerting to the Moderate parties, which were showing signs of rallying in opposition to the Congress policy, has been seized upon by the Nationalist Press as the basis of a raging tearing propaganda, in which Lord Russel is held to have revealed the real mind of the Government and shown the hollowness of the talk about Dominion Status.

"Liberty writes:—

If there are any in the ranks of the Moderates who still keep an open mind we would commend their attention to this speech. Will it be too much to hope that our Moderate friends will profit by this latest manifestation of Great Britain's good-will ?

"Advance, the new organ of Mr. Sen Gupta, the leader of the Congress Party in the Bengal Council, says:—

If we pity Lord Russel for his astounding folly and ignorance, we must thank him for the fact that his speech has smashed up and shattered the hopes throbbing in the breasts of political wiseacres in India.

"Basumati holds that the utterance is honest and candid, and faithfully reflects the views, not only of the Sydenhamites and other ex-official groups, but also of practically the whole of Great Britain, including the members of the Labour Government and members of the Labour Party, other than a few Extremists of the Left Wing."

The Moderates were in a pathetic position. They were telling Indians that they would bring—after hard work in the forthcoming London Conference—Home Rule for India. But Lord Russel had said without mincing matters that Home Rule for India was a distant if beautiful dream.

The sorrow and anger of the Moderates could be better imagined than described. Mrs. Besant's Home Rule Party which had accepted the invitation of the Labour Government to a Conference in London was also seriously reconsidering their position. Their friend in Parliament Major Graham Pole, then M. P., who is also the Honorary Secretary of the British

committee on Indian affairs published his protest against Lord Russel's speech and the unsatisfactory explanation thereof :—

“ Lord Russel says that the situation with regard to India has not been materially altered by his speech. Does he deny that the loss of the co-operation of such men as the Right Hon. Srinivasa Sastri, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ali Imam, Sir Phiroze Sethna, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, Mr. N. C. Kelkar, Mr. M. A. Jinnah—to name only a few—is material or not ?

“ As the direct result of his ill-considered words in his capacity as Under-Secretary of State for India these men have already intimated that, if his words mean what they appear to mean, neither they nor any other self-respecting Indian would attend the forthcoming Round Table Conference in London.

“ The purpose of that Conference is to see to what extent an agreed solution could be arrived at in regard to the Indian constitutional problems. These men, most of whom have held high Government posts in India and elsewhere, under most difficult and trying circumstances in their own country, have expressed their willingness to co-operate. At this vital juncture, when things are in a most critical and dangerous condition, the Under-Secretary of State has thought fit to say that progress towards responsible government can only be very slow, and that Dominion Status, being almost synonymous with complete independence, the hope of obtaining it is remote.

“ Is this in harmony with the speech of his chief in the House of Commons, which was an endeavour to meet a similar argument put forward by Lord Birkenhead ? Lord Russel even yet seems to be

entirely unaware of the importance attached to his words and his office."

Major Graham Pole was right in saying that Lord Russel's candour had embarrassed the Moderates and Besantites in India but he was wrong in stating that it was not in harmony with the utterance of the Socialist Secretary in India in the House of Commons. Go through Mr. Benn's speech in the House of Commons and you will fail to discover in it any pledge or assurance about the early grant of Dominion Status. Mr. Benn had said that the appointment of an Indian as a representative to an international conference on aerial navigation, a privilege which the other Dominions enjoyed, was tantamount to granting India Dominion Status which had already become part and parcel of the British policy towards India.¹ He further maintained that India had attained Dominion privileges when India was represented at an important conference in London dealing with Dominion legislation; when the Indian representative sat side by side with the representatives of Canada, South Africa, Australia, Newzealand, and the Irish Free State. India was likewise allotted representation at the Five-Power Naval Conference, with the rest of the Dominions, whereat the Indian representatives like the Dominion representatives would have voice and vote.²

A Labour back-bencher observed that these Indian representatives were the nominees of the Viceroy unlike the Colonial representatives who were the leaders of the people and appealed to the Secretary of State to secure a more adequate representation of India at these Conferences by giving the Indian Legislature some powers in the appointment of these delegations

1. *Hansard*, Wednesday, Dec. 18, 1929.

2. *Ibid*.

a suggestion which Mr. Benn merely agreed to take note of. The back bencher was no other than Mr. Fenner Brockway, then M. P., the Editor of the *New Leader*, an enthusiast for Indian Home Rule.

Moderates and Extremists ridiculed the conception of the claims of India for Home Rule, namely that what India needed was the alteration of the mode of representation in the Imperial Conferences !

"The Indian representative," wrote the Congress Press, "is no more than a prize-boy of Government of India whereas the Colonial representative is a Minister of a Government which represents the people."

India has no objection to a Government representative in Imperial or Inter-national Conference. India's objection is to the present system of Government. The Government of India owes no iota of responsibility to the people over whom it sways. Its constitutional responsibility is to the Secretary of State who is responsible to the Cabinet which is responsible to Parliament which is finally responsible to the British voters.

Neither the Socialist Secretary for India nor the most vociferous champion of Indian Home Rule in Parliament appeared to understand what exactly would satisfy India. Formal representations of India at the Empire or Inter-national Conferences have no use for a country which is given for the advantage of Britain—the advantage being to add to the numerical strength of her votes—the shadow of representation abroad but denied the substance of representative institutions at home.

Earl Russel was speaking not of the shadow but of the substance. So far as substance went Mr. Benn had unequivocally stated that there has been "no change of policy" in regard to India which the

Socialist Government's Conservative and other predecessors had laid down.

That policy—judging from what it has hitherto been and what it is and not from what it will be or will have to be—was neatly summed up in the speech of Earl Russel, a revised version of which appeared in an evening paper in London.¹

"I have been told," said Earl Russel, "you would like to hear about India, but because I am the Under-Secretary and may know so much I can tell you so little. Those of you who read the newspapers will see that our difficulties have not been made less during the Christmas season. Resolutions have been passed demanding the complete independence of India. They were brave words, but they were very foolish words, and nobody knows better than the Indians themselves that complete independence at this moment is impossible.

"Between Dominion Status and complete Independence there is not much difference, and that is not possible at this moment. When you have been bringing up a country and guiding it you cannot suddenly let go and say: 'Manage things for yourselves.' It takes practice to manage things for yourselves. How much only those who have watched the struggle of democracy know. Even the Labour Party, even the leaders of the Labour Party, found it difficult when they first took office, and we knew what we wanted.

"In India they would have insuperable difficulties in running things for themselves if we suddenly let go. There are many races and at least two dominant religions, and these races and religions do not work sympathetically together. And even in the

1. The *Evening Standard* of the 8th January, 1930.

discussions they have been divided, and they have not arrived at any way of living with each other. What they would do if they were suddenly left to themselves, what would happen, heaven only knows, and it is quite clear that Indians do not know.

"A child must learn to walk before it can run, and without in the least disparaging our subjects in the Indian Empire I say they have not yet learned to walk, and it will be some time before they can run.

"You had in Cambridge as your representative Edwin Montagu. He initiated the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms which were intended to form the basis of gradual self-government in India. What has been tried is a system of a sort of joint government in the Provincial legislatures, and the Indians have been slowly learning the arts of self-government. We do not wish all that to be thrown away, and we do not wish them to be thrown back into hopeless turmoil.

"We say to them, let them go along that road until they have become really capable of self-government. And the Labour Government, at any rate, is perfectly honest in saying that is our objective. That is what we are working for, but we are not helped in working for it by such foolish resolutions. No friend of India can but regret the tone of these resolutions. We are trying to get India along the road of peace in unity, with Indians making their own laws and administering them themselves.

"That is the road along which haste can be made slowly. Impatience does not help. The young are impatient, and those who are young in democratic government are equally impatient, but those who are older know that impatience does not a bit of good, and the short cut is not the quickest way.

My chief at the India Office is determined not to be hampered by foolish resolutions."

Read in the light of the policy of Britain towards India and the preamble to the Government of India Act, there was nothing in the speech of Lord Russel to which any honest man could take exception. "Read in the light of the speech," exclaimed the Congress leader, "the Round Table Conference in London was doomed to be a waste of time and a fresh cause for misunderstanding." Incidentally the new Congress policy confirmed their familiar anticipation and revealed their future plans.

The position that Mahatma Gandhi decided to take was felt by the Congress people to be the only self-respecting attitude for any patriotic Indian to take. Gandhi clearly explained his own position and that of the Indian National Congress in his weekly paper, *Young India*.

"The time must come when there may be a fight to a finish with one's back to the wall," declared Gandhi, writing in *Young India*. "With the present temper of Congressmen, with our internal dissensions, and with communal tension, it is difficult to discover an effective, innocent formula," he continued.

"It may be impossible to offer civil disobedience at this stage in the name of the Congress; it may be necessary to offer individual civil disobedience without the imprimatur of Congress and apart from it, but just now everything is in an embryonic state."

In the opinion of Gandhi, the Congress resolution about independence did not rule out the idea of a conference in every circumstance:—

"It merely and most properly says that in existing circumstances no good purpose can be served by the Congress being represented at the proposed

Conference. What are, then, the conceivable circumstances in which the Congress may be represented at such Conference? I can mention at least one such circumstance. If the British Government invites the Congress to a conference that is to discuss and frame, not any scheme, but a scheme definitely of an Independent Government and fulfils other conditions suitable for such a conference, I take it that the Congress leaders will gladly respond. Indeed, a conference there must be at some stage or other. It can take place, as the proposed Conference was expected to take place, out of Great Britain's good grace, or the pressure of world opinion, or out of pressure from us, as we hope it will be, if we develop sufficient strength. Whether such time is far or near depends upon how we utilize or waste this year."

If the British parties considered that Indians were not fit for Self-Government, the most proper thing for them would have been to scrap the Montagu reforms. If they thought that India must be granted Dominion Status it was better for them to abandon their attitude of opposition to Indian claims. That was how the Congress felt.

The White Paper reforms will not satisfy the Congress Right Wing whose programme was:

First: The grant of Home Rule to British India and the rapid preparation of India for self-defence and the withdrawal of the British garrison; and the simultaneous preparation of the Indian States by the rulers of the States themselves establishing responsible government in their territories.

Secondly: The introduction of full responsible Government for pan-India, and the setting up of a Supreme Parliament to which both British India and

the Indian States would send their representatives. That Supreme Parliament, they will urge, should have the same power in Indian matters as the Dominion Parliaments have in the Dominion affairs.

History will repeat itself and a future leader of the Congress Right Wing will make such a demand in the Legislature, proclaiming his anxiety to come to terms with England. The same anxiety, however, might not be shared by the Left Wingers who might not care to come to terms with England except on the terms dictated by a victorious opponent. The Congress Left Wing is only marking time.

One can imagine the Congress leader of the opposition in the Legislature appealing to Britain to come to an understanding with Mahatmaji in the difficult task of settling the Indian question once for all even as General Smuts came to an understanding with the self-same Gandhi in regard to the Indian difficulties in South Africa. One can hear the voice of the future: "If England misses this golden opportunity she will never again have such a splendid chance. A settlement to-day will leave no bitterness behind. A belated settlement as in Ireland will leave bitter memories in its trail."

Meantime, the White Paper Scheme will run the risk of being whittled down. Newspapers said that Lord Willingdon would resign his Viceroyalty in such a contingency. That was bunkum. Lord Willingdon is not so thin-skinned.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EDUCATED AGITATOR.

Judge not according to the appearance—

St. John, Chapter VII.

Render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

*St. Paul: Epistle to the Romans,
Chapter XIII.*

The educated agitators are the anathema-maranatha of the superannuated bureaucrat. Sir Michael O'Dwyer has been "digging the grave of British rule in India"* in the columns of the *Daily Mail*. Lord Meston, the shrewd Scotsman, lacks the fiery Irishman's vehemence which alone must be held responsible for the O'Dwyerian description of Gandhi as a fraud and an impostor. What is lacking in venom adds to the vigour of Lord Meston's repudiation of the claims of the advance school. His dignity and suaive manner of expression increase the strength of his opposition. His is the group of thinkers and retired satraps who keep their heads cool and exercise the restraint due to their position as once responsible rulers—with a number of friends and admirers still in the land which they had served—whose arguments appeal to the British public, generally ill-informed on Indian questions.

That no serious attempt is made by Indians to combat the propaganda of our critics and opponents, is the mistake of Indians themselves. The more

*The quotation was the title of his sensational article with flaming streamers.

pessimistic of them feel that England is 'doped' and no amount of propaganda can be of any use there. The work in India alone, in their opinion, counts. When that work bears fruit, they feel that England will begin to find that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark." The pessimists, therefore, have no use for British propaganda. But the Moderates have no reason to leave out this essential part of their political duty. That they have neglected it is a deplorable fact. By this neglect they have allowed judgment to do by default.

The views expressed by the retired officers and officials present only one side of the picture. There is another side to it. It is well that that side is also presented. One must have no hesitation to own what is true, while one must combat what is untrue.

In his forceful and eloquent style, Lord Meston paints a picture of the Indian situation :—

"The crisis in India develops according to standard pattern. In methods and design it is exactly like previous crises. It differs from them only in degree, and in the fact that each successive demonstration of the kind gets bolder and more provocative. Complex though the position has become, the key to it is simple. There exists in India, as cannot be too gravely or too often insisted upon, a section of Hinduism—able, insidious and powerful—*which will never be reconciled to British control*. No political concessions will appease it, no compromise will abate its demands. It has no use for our ideas of democracy; it detests the whole scheme of Western civilisation; it hankers after the restoration of its own "ancient rule of life, its own social structure, its own methods of government. It survived and absorbed the reforming faith of